

of thousands of individuals. Plaintiff also seeks statutory damages on behalf of herself and members of the class, and any other available legal or equitable remedies.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

5. Jurisdiction is proper under 28 U.S.C. § 1331 as Plaintiff alleges violations of a federal statute. Jurisdiction is also proper under 28 U.S.C. § 1332(d)(2) because Plaintiff alleges a national class, which will result in at least one class member belonging to a different state than that of Defendant. Plaintiff seeks up to \$1,500.00 (one-thousand-five-hundred dollars) in damages for each call in violation of the TCPA, which, when aggregated among a proposed class numbering in the tens of thousands, or more, exceeds the \$5,000,000.00 (five-million dollars) threshold for federal court jurisdiction under the Class Action Fairness Act (“CAFA”). Therefore, both the elements of diversity jurisdiction and CAFA jurisdiction are present.

6. Venue is proper in the United States District Court for the Western District of Missouri pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) and (c) because Defendant is deemed to reside in any judicial district in which it is subject to the court’s personal jurisdiction, and because Defendant provides and markets its services within this district thereby establishing sufficient contacts to subject it to personal jurisdiction. Further, Defendant’s tortious conduct against Plaintiff occurred within the State of Missouri and, on information and belief, Defendant has sent the same text messages complained of by Plaintiff to other individuals within this judicial district, such that some of Defendant’s acts in making such calls have occurred within this district, subjecting Defendant to jurisdiction in the State of Missouri.

PARTIES

7. Plaintiff is a natural person who, at all times relevant to this action, was a resident of Saline County, Missouri.

8. Defendant is a Missouri corporation whose principal office is located at 3110 West Broadway, Sedalia, MO 65301. Defendant directs, markets, and provides its business activities throughout the State of Missouri.

THE TCPA

9. The TCPA prohibits: (1) any person from calling a cellular telephone number; (2) using an automatic telephone dialing system; (3) without the recipient's prior express consent. 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(A).

10. The TCPA defines an "automatic telephone dialing system" ("ATDS") as "equipment that has the capacity - (A) to store or produce telephone numbers to be called, using a random or sequential number generator; and (B) to dial such numbers." 47 U.S.C. § 227(a)(1).

11. The TCPA exists to prevent communications like the ones described within this Complaint. *See Mims v. Arrow Fin. Servs., LLC*, 132 S. Ct. 740, 744 (2012).

12. In an action under the TCPA, a plaintiff must show only that the defendant "called a number assigned to a cellular telephone service using an automatic dialing system or prerecorded voice." *Breslow v. Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.*, 857 F. Supp. 2d 1316, 1319 (S.D. Fla. 2012), *aff'd*, 755 F.3d 1265 (11th Cir. 2014).

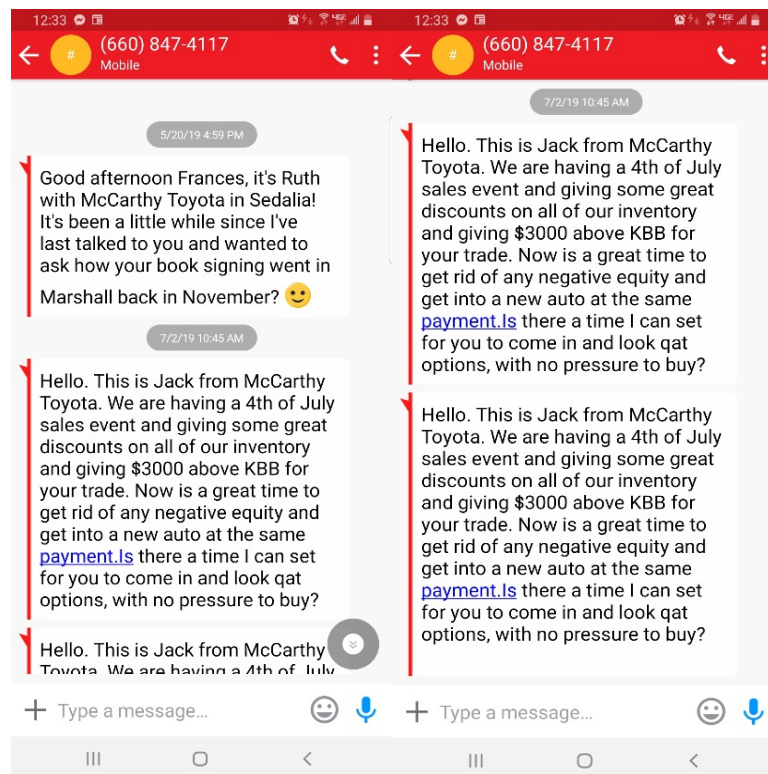
13. The Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") is empowered to issue rules and regulations implementing the TCPA. According to the FCC's findings, calls in violation of the TCPA are prohibited because, as Congress found, automated or prerecorded telephone calls are a greater nuisance and invasion of privacy than live solicitation calls, and such calls can be costly and inconvenient. The FCC also recognized that wireless customers are charged for incoming calls whether they pay in advance or after the minutes are used.

14. A defendant must demonstrate that it obtained the plaintiff's prior express consent. *See In the Matter of Rules and Regulations Implementing the Tel. Consumer Prot. Act of 1991*, 30 FCC Rcd. 7961, 7991-92 (2015) (requiring express consent “for non-telemarketing and non-advertising calls”).

15. Further, the FCC has issued rulings and clarified that consumers are entitled to the same consent-based protections for text messages as they are for calls to wireless numbers. *See Satterfield v. Simon & Schuster, Inc.*, 569 F.3d 946, 952 (9th Cir. 2009) (“The FCC has determined that a text message falls within the meaning of ‘to make any call’ in 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(A)”).

FACTS

16. On or about May 20, 2019, and July 2, 2019, Defendant sent the following telemarketing text messages to Plaintiff's cellular telephone number ending in 9119 (the “9119 Number”):



17. Defendant's text messages were transmitted to Plaintiff's cellular telephone, and within the time frame relevant to this action.

18. Defendant's text messages constitute telemarketing because they encouraged the future purchase or investment in property, goods, or services, i.e., selling Plaintiff an automobile.

19. The information contained in the text messages advertises that Defendant is "having a 4th of July sales event and giving great discounts on all [its] inventory" and further states that "[n]ow is a great time to get rid of any negative equity and get into a new auto at the same payment."

20. Plaintiff received the subject texts within this judicial district and, therefore, Defendant's violation of the TCPA occurred within this district. Upon information and belief, Defendant caused other text messages to be sent to individuals residing within this judicial district.

21. At no point in time did Plaintiff provide Defendant with her express written consent to be contacted using an ATDS.

22. Plaintiff is the subscriber and sole user of the 9119 Number and is financially responsible for phone service to the 9119 Number.

23. Plaintiff has been registered with the national do-not-call registry since December 16, 2004.

24. The impersonal and generic nature of Defendant's text messages demonstrate that Defendant utilized an ATDS in transmitting the messages. *See Jenkins v. LL Atlanta, LLC*, No. 1:14-cv-2791-WSD, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 30051, at *11 (N.D. Ga. Mar. 9, 2016) ("These assertions, combined with the generic, impersonal nature of the text message advertisements and the use of a short code, support an inference that the text messages were sent using an ATDS.") (citing *Legg v. Voice Media Grp., Inc.*, 20 F. Supp. 3d 1370, 1354 (S.D. Fla. 2014) (plaintiff alleged facts sufficient to infer text messages were sent using ATDS; use of a short code and volume of mass messaging alleged would

be impractical without use of an ATDS); *Kramer v. Autobyte, Inc.*, 759 F. Supp. 2d 1165, 1171 (N.D. Cal. 2010) (finding it "plausible" that defendants used an ATDS where messages were advertisements written in an impersonal manner and sent from short code); *Hickey v. Voxernet LLC*, 887 F. Supp. 2d 1125, 1130; *Robbins v. Coca-Cola Co.*, No. 13-CV-132-IEG NLS, 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 72725, 2013 WL 2252646, at *3 (S.D. Cal. May 22, 2013) (observing that mass messaging would be impracticable without use of an ATDS)).

25. The text messages originated from telephone number 660-847-4117, a number which upon information and belief is owned and operated by Defendant.

26. The number used by Defendant (660-847-4117) is known as a "long code," a standard 10-digit phone number that enabled Defendant to send SMS text messages *en masse*, while deceiving recipients into believing that the message was personalized and sent from a telephone number operated by an individual.

27. Long codes work as follows: Private companies known as SMS gateway providers have contractual arrangements with mobile carriers to transmit two-way SMS traffic. These SMS gateway providers send and receive SMS traffic to and from the mobile phone networks' SMS centers, which are responsible for relaying those messages to the intended mobile phone. This allows for the transmission of a large number of SMS messages to and from a long code.

28. To send the text messages, Defendant used a messaging platform (the "Platform") that permitted Defendant to transmit thousands of automated text messages without any human involvement.

29. The Platform has the capacity to store telephone numbers.

30. The Platform has the capacity to generate sequential numbers.

31. The Platform has the capacity to dial numbers in sequential order.

32. The Platform has the capacity to dial numbers from a list of numbers.

33. The Platform has the capacity to dial numbers without human intervention.

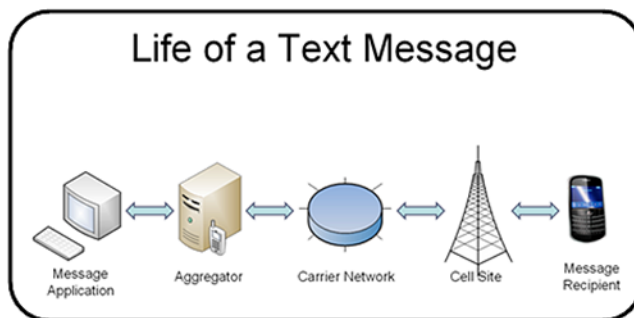
34. The Platform has the capacity to schedule the time and date for future transmission of text messages.

35. To transmit the messages at issue, the Platform automatically executed the following steps:

- i. The Platform retrieved each telephone number from a list of numbers in the sequential order the numbers were listed;
- ii. The Platform then generated each number in the sequential order listed and combined each number with the content of Defendants' message to create "packets" consisting of one telephone number and the message content;
- iii. Each packet was then transmitted in the sequential order listed to an SMS aggregator, which acts an intermediary between the Platform, mobile carriers (e.g. AT&T), and consumers.
- iv. Upon receipt of each packet, the SMS aggregator transmitted each packet – automatically and with no human intervention – to the respective mobile carrier for the telephone number, again in the sequential order listed by Defendants. Each mobile carrier then sent the message to its customer's mobile telephone.

36. The above execution these instructions occurred seamlessly, with no human intervention, and almost instantaneously. Indeed, the Platform is capable of transmitting thousands of text messages following the above steps in minutes, if not less.

37. The following graphic summarizes the above steps and demonstrates that the dialing of the text messages at issue was done by the Platform automatically and without any human intervention:



38. Defendant’s unsolicited text messages caused Plaintiff actual harm, including invasion of her privacy, aggravation, annoyance, intrusion on seclusion, trespass, and conversion. Defendant’s text messages also inconvenienced Plaintiff and caused disruption to her daily life.

39. Plaintiff estimates that she spent approximately fifteen minutes investigating the unwanted text messages including how they obtained her number and who the Defendant was.

40. Furthermore, Defendant’s text message took up memory on Plaintiff’s cellular phone. The cumulative effect of unsolicited text messages like Defendant’s poses a real risk of ultimately rendering the phone unusable for text messaging purposes as a result of the phone’s memory being taken up. See <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0350-text-message-spam#text> (finding that text message solicitations like the ones sent by Defendant present a “triple threat” of identity theft, unwanted cell phone charges, and slower cell phone performance).

41. Defendant’s text message also can slow cell phone performance by taking up space on the recipient phone’s memory. See <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0350-text-message-spam#text> (finding that spam text messages can slow cell phone performance by taking up phone memory space).

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

PROPOSED CLASS

42. Plaintiff brings this case as a class action pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23, on behalf of herself and all others similarly situated.

43. Plaintiff brings this case on behalf of a Class defined as follows:

No Consent Class: All persons who from four years prior to the filing of this action (1) were sent a text message by or on behalf of Defendant, (2) using an automatic telephone dialing system, (3) for the purpose of soliciting Defendant's goods and services, and (4) for whom Defendant claims (a) it did not obtain prior express written consent, or (b) it obtained prior express written consent in the same manner as Defendant claims it supposedly obtained prior express written consent to call the Plaintiff.

Do Not Call Registry Class: All persons in the United States who from four years prior to the filing of this action (1) were sent a text message by or on behalf of Defendant; (2) more than one time within any 12-month period; (3) where the person's telephone number had been listed on the National Do Not Call Registry for at least thirty days; (4) for the purpose of selling Defendant's products and services; and (5) for whom Defendant claims (a) it did not obtain prior express written consent, or (b) it obtained prior express written consent in the same manner as Defendant claims it supposedly obtained prior express written consent to call the Plaintiff.

44. Defendant and its employees or agents are excluded from the Class. Plaintiff does not know the number of members in the Class, but believes the Class members number in the several thousands, if not more.

NUMEROSITY

45. Upon information and belief, Defendant has placed automated and/or prerecorded calls to cellular telephone numbers belonging to thousands of consumers throughout the United States

without their prior express consent. The members of the Class, therefore, are believed to be so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable.

46. The exact number and identities of the Class members are unknown at this time and can only be ascertained through discovery. Identification of the Class members is a matter capable of ministerial determination from Defendant's call records.

COMMON QUESTIONS OF LAW AND FACT

47. There are numerous questions of law and fact common to the Class which predominate over any questions affecting only individual members of the Class. Among the questions of law and fact common to the Class are:

- (1) Whether Defendant made non-emergency calls to Plaintiff's and Class members' cellular telephones using an ATDS;
- (2) Whether Defendant can meet its burden of showing that it obtained prior express written consent to make such calls;
- (3) Whether Defendant's conduct was knowing and willful;
- (4) Whether Defendant is liable for damages, and the amount of such damages; and
- (5) Whether Defendant should be enjoined from such conduct in the future.

48. The common questions in this case are capable of having common answers. If Plaintiff's claim that Defendant routinely transmits text messages to telephone numbers assigned to cellular telephone services is accurate, Plaintiff and the Class members will have identical claims capable of being efficiently adjudicated and administered in this case.

TYPICALITY

49. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the Class members, as they are all based on the same factual and legal theories.

PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF THE CLASS MEMBERS

50. Plaintiff is a representative who will fully and adequately assert and protect the interests of the Class, and has retained competent counsel. Accordingly, Plaintiff is an adequate representative and will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Class.

PROCEEDING VIA CLASS ACTION IS SUPERIOR AND ADVISABLE

51. A class action is superior to all other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of this lawsuit, because individual litigation of the claims of all members of the Class is economically unfeasible and procedurally impracticable. While the aggregate damages sustained by the Class are in the millions of dollars, the individual damages incurred by each member of the Class resulting from Defendant's wrongful conduct are too small to warrant the expense of individual lawsuits. The likelihood of individual Class members prosecuting their own separate claims is remote, and, even if every member of the Class could afford individual litigation, the court system would be unduly burdened by individual litigation of such cases.

52. The prosecution of separate actions by members of the Class would create a risk of establishing inconsistent rulings and/or incompatible standards of conduct for Defendant. For example, one court might enjoin Defendant from performing the challenged acts, whereas another may not. Additionally, individual actions may be dispositive of the interests of the Class, although certain class members are not parties to such actions.

COUNT I
Violations of the TCPA, 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)
(On Behalf of Plaintiff and the Class)

53. Plaintiff re-alleges and incorporates the foregoing allegations as if fully set forth herein.

54. It is a violation of the TCPA to make “any call (other than a call made for emergency purposes or made with the prior express consent of the called party) using any automatic telephone dialing system ... to any telephone number assigned to a ... cellular telephone service” 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(A)(iii).

55. Defendant – or third parties directed by Defendant – used equipment having the capacity to dial numbers without human intervention to make non-emergency telephone calls to the cellular telephones of Plaintiff and the other members of the Class defined below.

56. These calls were made without regard to whether or not Defendant had first obtained express permission from the called party to make such calls. In fact, Defendant did not have prior express consent to call the cell phones of Plaintiff and the other members of the putative Class when its calls were made.

57. Defendant has, therefore, violated § 227(b)(1)(A)(iii) of the TCPA by using an automatic telephone dialing system to make non-emergency telephone calls to the cell phones of Plaintiff and the other members of the putative Class without their prior express written consent.

58. Defendant knew that it did not have prior express consent to make these calls, and knew or should have known that it was using equipment that constituted an automatic telephone dialing system. The violations were therefore willful or knowing.

59. As a result of Defendant’s conduct and pursuant to § 227(b)(3) of the TCPA, Plaintiff and the other members of the putative Class were harmed and are each entitled to a minimum of \$500.00 in damages for each violation. Plaintiff and the class are also entitled to an injunction against future calls. *Id.*

COUNT II
Knowing and/or Willful Violation of the TCPA, 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)
(On Behalf of Plaintiff and the Class)

60. Plaintiff re-allege and incorporate paragraphs 1-52 as if fully set forth herein.

61. At all times relevant, Defendant knew or should have known that its conduct as alleged herein violated the TCPA.

62. Defendant knew that it did not have prior express consent to make these calls, and knew or should have known that its conduct was a violation of the TCPA.

63. Because Defendant knew or should have known that Plaintiff and Class Members had not given prior express consent to receive its autodialed calls, the Court should treble the amount of statutory damages available to Plaintiff and the other members of the putative Class pursuant to § 227(b)(3) of the TCPA.

64. As a result of Defendant's violations, Plaintiff and the Class Members are entitled to an award of \$1,500.00 in statutory damages, for each and every violation, pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3)(B) and 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3)(C).

COUNT III
Violation of the TCPA, 47 U.S.C. § 227
(On Behalf of Plaintiff and the Do Not Call Registry Class)

65. Plaintiff repeats and realleges the paragraphs 1 through 52 of this Complaint and incorporates them by reference herein.

66. The TCPA's implementing regulation, 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200(c), provides that "[n]o person or entity shall initiate any telephone solicitation" to "[a] residential telephone subscriber who has registered his or her telephone number on the national do-not-call registry of persons who do not wish to receive telephone solicitations that is maintained by the federal government."

67. 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200(e), provides that § 64.1200(c) and (d) “are applicable to any person or entity making telephone solicitations or telemarketing calls to wireless telephone numbers.”¹

68. 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200(d) further provides that “[n]o person or entity shall initiate any call for telemarketing purposes to a residential telephone subscriber unless such person or entity has instituted procedures for maintaining a list of persons who request not to receive telemarketing calls made by or on behalf of that person or entity.”

69. Any “person who has received more than one telephone call within any 12-month period by or on behalf of the same entity in violation of the regulations prescribed under this subsection may” may bring a private action based on a violation of said regulations, which were promulgated to protect telephone subscribers’ privacy rights to avoid receiving telephone solicitations to which they object. 47 U.S.C. § 227(c).

70. Defendant violated 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200(c) by initiating, or causing to be initiated, telephone solicitations to telephone subscribers such as Plaintiff and the Do Not Call Registry Class members who registered their respective telephone numbers on the National Do Not Call Registry, a listing of persons who do not wish to receive telephone solicitations that is maintained by the federal government.

71. Defendant violated 47 U.S.C. § 227(c)(5) because Plaintiff and the Do Not Call Registry Class received more than one telephone call in a 12-month period made by or on behalf of Defendant in violation of 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200, as described above. As a result of Defendant’s conduct as alleged herein, Plaintiff and the Do Not Call Registry Class suffered actual damages and, under section 47

¹ *Rules and Regulations Implementing the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991*, CG Docket No. 02-278, Report and Order, 18 FCC Rcd 14014 (2003) Available at https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-03-153A1.pdf

U.S.C. § 227(c), are entitled, *inter alia*, to receive up to \$500 in damages for such violations of 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200.

72. To the extent Defendant's misconduct is determined to be willful and knowing, the Court should, pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 227(c)(5), treble the amount of statutory damages recoverable by the members of the Do Not Call Registry Class.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, individually and on behalf of the Classes, prays for the following relief:

- a) An order certifying this case as a class action on behalf of the Classes as defined above, and appointing Plaintiff as the representative of the Classes and counsel as Class Counsel;
- a) An award of actual and statutory damages;
- b) An order declaring that Defendant's actions, as set out above, violate the TCPA;
- c) A declaratory judgment that Defendant's telephone calling equipment constitutes an automatic telephone dialing system under the TCPA;
- d) An injunction requiring Defendant to cease all unsolicited text messaging activity, and to otherwise protect the interests of the Classes;
- e) An injunction prohibiting Defendant from using, or contracting the use of, an automatic telephone dialing system without obtaining, recipient's consent to receive calls made with such equipment; and
- f) Such further and other relief as the Court deems necessary.

JURY DEMAND

Plaintiff and Class Members hereby demand a trial by jury.

Dated: December 10, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

ONDERLAW, LLC

/s/ Martin L. Daesch

Martin L. Daesch, #40494
Jesse B. Rochman, #60712
110 East Lockwood
St. Louis, MO 63119
Telephone: (314) 963-9000
Facsimile: (314) 963-1700
daesch@onderlaw.com
rochman@onderlaw.com

and

SHAMIS & GENTILE, P.A.

/s/ Andrew J. Shamis

Andrew J. Shamis, Esq.
Florida Bar No. 101754
ashamis@shamisgentile.com

/s/ Garrett O. Berg

Garrett O. Berg, Esq.
Florida Bar No. 1000427
gberg@shamisgentile.com
14 NE 1st Avenue, Suite 1205
Miami, FL 33132
Telephone: 305-479-2299

EDELSBERG LAW, PA

/s/ Scott Edelsberg

Scott Edelsberg, Esq.
Florida Bar No. 0100537
scott@edelsberglaw.com
20900 NE 30th Ave, Suite 417
Aventura, FL 33180
Telephone: 305-975-3320

Counsel for Plaintiff and the Class